

ISSUE 4 SUMMER 2001

ADULT LEARNING AUSTRALIA



8 | KAKADU A PLACE OF LEARNING

12 | CITIZENSHIP IN PROGRESS

20 | MUSEUMS & GALLERIES LETTING US DOWN

24 | LEARNING THROUGH BOOKCLUBS





▲ The ALW Ricoh Photo Competition attracted entries from all over Australia, from Bruny Island in Tasmania to the Tiwi Islands in the Northern Territory. This photo by William Knights depicts 4WD training on the Tiwi Islands.

Adult Learning Australia Inc. (ALA) is the peak body for organisations and individuals involved with adult learning in Australia. ALA informs and fosters networks of adult educators; advises and lobbies government; promotes policy development; represents Australia on international education bodies; coordinates Adult Learners Week; and more.

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ALA also publishes the *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, in April, July and November. ALA members receive this publication as part of their membership.

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CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 From the Editor
- 4 Briefs
- 4 Net*Working 2001
- 5 East Timorese training centre completed
- 6 What counts and who is (and isn't) counting?
- 8 Place and the ecology of learning
- 12 Citizenship in progress
- 13 Adult Learners Week
- 16 Rejuvenation
- 19 Accounting for change – the GST in ACE
- 20 Only half the job: How museums and galleries are letting us down

WEBSITES WORTH VISITING

- 24 Learning through bookclubs

BRANCH REPORTS

- 25 Tasmania
- 25 Western Australia
- 26 New South Wales
- 27 New members
- 27 Join ALA

- Back Page
- Calendar



Foster debate on the difficult issues

The launch of the Learning Circle kit on civics and governance (reported in this newsletter) was an enjoyable occasion. It brought together people of all ages and from different backgrounds and reminded us that governance extends beyond parliaments. The federal election caused me to give this some more thought. Now that the election campaign is over, we can reflect on it and the electoral process as a means of determining our future directions. I wonder how many people can say they are happy with the nature and content of what passes for debate in Australia today.

We witness a presidential-style campaign that focuses almost entirely on the two leaders, homogenised images, carefully arranged appearances, and rigorous disciplining of party members who express ideas that are considered 'off message'. Indeed, the major parties strive to control as much as possible. During this campaign, Julie Bishop and Peter Knott were hauled into line by John Howard and Kim Beazley respectively, for voicing concerns about the

parties' policies on refugees and terrorism.

One message to take from this is that the parties want to avoid any genuine, unscripted discussion on critical issues – an irony given that the war on terrorism is supposed to defend free speech among other freedoms. Australia's population size and composition, immigration policy, national security, our standing in the Asian region and race were dominant during the election campaign. How comfortable are we that the discussion on these issues has progressed our nation? But these issues must be debated seriously. They won't go away, and while they are ignored or used as a means of winning an election, they will not be resolved in a way that will increase our sense of security as a nation and make us genuinely welcome in our region.

Despite what some political leaders will say, there is a deep division within the community. During the election campaign, former political leaders of both major parties, diplomats, authors, and leaders from church

and business groups all intervened to alert us to the long-term, negative effect of using race as a political issue. Their warning was reiterated in international press reports about the threat to Australia's reputation, culminating in the New York Times rhetorical question "which candidate will be the most hard-hearted"? The majority of voters rejected the warning but many people are clearly uneasy about these issues. We must ask: in the aftermath of the election, do Australians feel the same sense of collective satisfaction we did after the Olympics?

How can we undertake the necessary community discussion? How can we involve more people in the discussion in a non-partisan way? Adult educators have a role to play here. Learning Circles are a much needed part of a broader approach to developing a society that fosters discussion and debate. Political parties can also play a leading role by fostering debate, instead of silencing those within their ranks who want to suggest alternatives.

Tony Brown

VIC ACE TEACHERS WIN STATE TRAINING AWARD

Congratulations to the team of five teachers from Donvale Living and Learning Centre who won Outstanding Teacher/Trainer of the Year at this year's Victorian Training Awards. The adult literacy and basic education team of Karen Dymke, Ros Butcher, Barbara Macfarlan, Elizabeth Price and Haido Skirilis won a \$10 000 professional development grant. The team delivers a range of programs covering youth at risk, online learning, and adult literacy for people with learning disabilities such as dyslexia and auditory perception problems. In partnership with Monash University, they have developed a screening procedure that determines whether people with literacy problems have a learning disability. The procedure is helping them tailor a teaching approach to suit each student's needs. "It's a great honour and we're thrilled to be representing adult and community education", Karen Dymke said. ■

VICTORIA TO RESEARCH LIFELONG LEARNING

The Victorian government announced a major research study into lifelong learning and adult

education in rural and regional Victoria during Adult Learners Week. Minister Lynne Kosky said the \$300 000 study to be carried out by the Australian Catholic University (ACU) would aim to identify the barriers preventing adults from participating in education and training in the ACE sector. "Research has shown fewer than one in three students in accredited adult education courses go on to further education or training. ACU's research will tell us why and how we can overcome this," Ms Kosky said. ■

2002 EUREKA PRIZES

The Australian Museum's Eureka Prizes, will next year cover 16 categories. New prizes join established prizes such as environmental education programs. \$10 000 goes to the winner in each category. More info and entry/nomination forms are available from <http://www.amonline.net.au/eureka>. ■

LIFELONG LEARNING RADIO SERIES MAKING NEWS

A radio series produced at 5UV Radio Adelaide as part of its lifelong learning programming has gained national recognition. *Aspects of Ageing* was one of six finalists in the

radio category 'Real Images of Older Australians' in the annual Commonwealth Media and Advertising Awards, and came in as runner up. The fifteen *Aspects of Ageing* programs explore issues such as finding fulfilment in retirement, building a healthy and active lifestyle, gaining the benefits of today's technology, and enjoying grandchildren. The series also looks at the challenges of living alone, coping with social isolation, and handing in that driver's licence. The 'Real Images of Older Australians' judging panel described it as "an excellent, well researched and enlightening series". Educators anywhere in Australia with an interest in contributing to the development of lifelong learning programming on Radio Adelaide and/or nationally on Australian Community Radio, are invited to email Tony Ryan at tony.ryan@adelaide.edu.au. ■

FINALLY...

Richard Pinder has been appointed Executive Director of the WEA in Sydney. Andrew McCallum has been elected ACOSS's new President. Andrew replaced outgoing President Michael Raper at the ACOSS Congress in October. ■

NET*Working 2001

NET*Working 2001 took place in Brisbane in October. It was a major national conference organised by ANTA to inform and inspire people in the VET field to embrace flexible learning practices. An initiative of the Australian Flexible Learning Framework – a five-year plan of activities – Net*Working 2001 aimed to develop creative, capable learners in the VET sector. The theme of the conference was 'From

virtual to reality', so the emphasis was on realising the potential of e-learning.

ANTA's subdomain on flexible learning at www.flexiblelearning.net.au contains highlights and photos from the conference, as well as links to 'LearnsScope' – a professional development initiative for VET practitioners, which helps them apply new technologies – and 'toolboxes' for flexible learning. A



toolbox is a collection of resources, suggested learning strategies and material to support online delivery of qualifications from recognised Training Packages. ■

East Timorese training centre completed

East Timor's new Vocational Education Centre in Dili was completed in early November. The Centre was funded by donations from Australian building companies, the

Contractors, joined with the CFMEU and APHEDA (the ACTU's Development aid organisation) in raising A\$250 000 for the project, which includes as a major component

will be an independent multi-functional training and resource centre for literacy, information technology, English as a second language, carpentry and occupational health and safety, managed by a Board comprising of local Timorese partners.

The name of the training centre is Knua Buka Hatene – the Tetum name means “a community place of learning”.

Additional funding of A\$30–40 000 will lead complete Stage Two of Knua Buka Hatene, comprising additional workshop space that will enable more trainees to benefit from practical trades based training.

development community and Australia's largest construction union, the CFMEU.

After playing a leading role in support of East Timorese independence, the Australian construction industry union made a commitment to assist in the reconstruction of East Timor.

This assistance has taken the form of the East Timor Vocational Education Training Project. Fourteen companies and industry bodies, including Walter Construction Group, Multiplex and Leighton

the construction of a vocational training centre in Dili.

The name of the training centre is Knua Buka Hatene – the Tetum name means “a community place of learning”. There are two other smaller components of the project, equipment for a technical high school and the development of carpentry workshop cooperatives in rural areas. The official launch of the project took place in June 2000.

The funds raised enabled the construction of Stage One of Knua Buka Hatene to proceed. It

APHEDA is responsible for the in-country management of the project, including the liaison and coordination with local partner organisations and their project committees.

In the long term, the East Timor Vocational Education Training Project reflects the hope that the Australian construction industry will be able to work in partnership with the people of East Timor. ■

Stay safe and happy

Adult Learning Australia would like to wish our members and friends a safe holiday season and a happy new year.

This year ALA's National Office will be closing down over the Christmas New Year period. The office will close on Friday 21 December and re-open on Monday 14 January.

What counts and who is (and isn't) counting?

AUSTRALIAN ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION (ACE) STATISTICS 2000: AN OVERVIEW

Leabrook, SA: NCVER, 2001. \$21.45 or
<http://www.ncver.edu.au/cgi-bin/gda.pl?id=2008>

The NCVER estimates that in 2000 1.1–1.3 million people or 7.5–8.5 per cent of Australia's adult population enrolled in some form of ACE – adding up to 25–30 million hours of learning. A slight drop in student numbers since 1999 of 3.8 per cent is compensated for by a rise in annual hours of 2.8 per cent.

We can only guess what insights might emerge if the available data were more comprehensive.

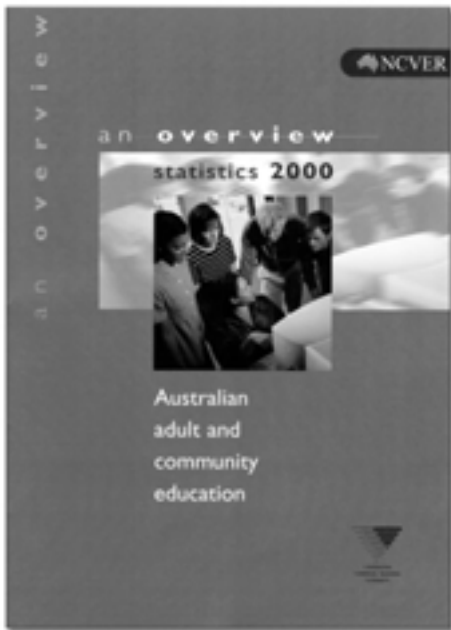
The 477 800 ACE students reported on to The National VET Data Collection Project represent only a fraction of ACE activity. The Appendix comparing state and territory participation shows that NSW and Victoria combined account for nearly 86 per cent of all ACE enrolments. ABS 1999 figures show that NSW and Victoria have about 59 per cent of the population of Australia. (The *Australia Now* statistical profile via <http://www.abs.gov.au> has general Australian population statistics.) Disparities in ACE enrolments from state to state may reflect a lack of statistical collection, and variations in government policies, more than the incidence of community-based education programs.

We can only guess what insights might emerge if the available data were more comprehensive.

The report is a comparison primarily between ACE and VET, or within ACE of VET and non-VET programs. It doesn't provide general population averages that would assist in interpreting the data and identifying strengths and weaknesses in participation.

The following points struck me as interesting:

- An ACE student is about 5 per cent more likely to live in a capital city than an average VET student.
- Non-vocational ACE students enrolled with community providers “are more likely to live in rural and remote areas” than students enrolled with TAFE and other government providers of ACE.
- Non-vocational programs account for 54.4 per cent of all ACE students, but only 30.9 per cent of all ACE annual hours, showing that students attending non-vocational ACE are more likely to study part-time or short courses.
- Vocational ACE students are divided into formal vocational ACE students – gaining a qualification recognised under the AQF – and informal vocational ACE, which does not lead to a recognised qualification. In 2000, the number of ACE student numbers enrolled in formal VET fell by 16.3 per cent while enrolments in informal VET rose by 4.4 per cent.



- Vocational ACE delivers online about 2/3 as much as all of VET (2.8–4.1%), but delivers a greater proportion of its program as employment-based VET than all of VET (6.4–4.8%). Intriguingly, ACE delivers 1.5 per cent of its non-vocational programs in an employment-based setting. College/campus-based delivery predominates in both ACE and VET at around 84 per cent.
- An ACE student is about 1.6 times more likely than a VET student to be female or to be over 35 years old.
- VET student age distribution shows a pronounced peak around 18–19 years, whereas ACE students age distribution is broad and fairly even, according to a graph on page 12.

- More than twice as many ACE students are female (69.5 per cent) as male (30.5 per cent) compared to an almost even sex distribution in VET.
- The two levels of prior educational attainment in which ACE students were a greater proportion than VET students of their respective totals were post-secondary education other than a trade/technician certificate and years 10 or 11 of school education. This latter suggests that ACE is a second chance for many who did not complete their formal schooling, or enrichment education for others who have attained formal post-secondary qualifications.
- Favoured subjects for non-vocational ACE students are in visual and performing arts, hospitality tourism and personal services, and the humanities, accounting for over 60 per cent of non-vocational enrolments. About 60 per cent of vocational ACE students enrolled in social, educational and employment skills, maths and computing and administration, business, economics, and law.

The 27-page report is well-laid out, and provides statistical tables as well as interpreting some key points. It is easy to read, and worth scouting for points of special interest. ■

Janet Burstall is ALA's Information Manager until the end of the year.

FOUR DELEGATES TO THIS YEAR'S ALA CONFERENCE IN KAKADU WROTE TO US WITH THEIR IMPRESSIONS. TONY BROWN INTRODUCES THEM.

Place & the ecology of learning

The last ALA conference in the Northern Territory was in 1993, when land rights was a hot topic. Conference delegates in Alice Springs passed a resolution of support. This year's conference followed the divisive and unresolved debates around reconciliation, the stolen generations and the native title

How had this happened? Why didn't we know about the lived experience of colonisation? Why were we so ignorant of our shared landscape and unaware of the history and cultures of other Australians? Why had our education been so deficient?

amendments. Inevitably, issues of place – geographical, historical and personal/social – were prominent for those attending this year's Kakadu Conference.

For many this physical place was unfamiliar: the vast Alligator River flood plains, the rocky hills of Arnhem Land, the bush in Kakadu, the amazing wildlife in Yellow Waters. The urban environments of Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Brisbane were a world away.

But this place was different in other ways. Here were cultures, histories, languages and art that many of us were unfamiliar with.

How had this happened? Why didn't we know about the lived experience of

colonisation? Why were we so ignorant of our shared landscape and unaware of the history and cultures of other Australians? Why had our education been so deficient?

The underlying theme of the Conference was to learn about this place and to think about how that learning would effect us when we returned to our place. We toured visitors' centres and museums, crossed into Arnhem Land and explored special places with ancient rock paintings, travelled the Alligator rivers, visited the TAFE/NTU Kakadu Centre, the Ranger uranium mine and returned to small groups to debrief and reflect. We heard presentations from local people and guest speakers, told stories, enjoyed outdoor dinners and for three days settled in. Fewer than 100 people attended because of the difficulties in getting to the Northern Territory and the collapse of Ansett, but for those fortunate to attend it was a moving learning experience.

NEW EYES FOR MY PLACE

Living and working in a special place in the Dandenong Ranges in Victoria and being very aware of the connection we have there and its relationship to everything we do, it was a great privilege to be able to travel to another very special place and have the opportunity to connect, however briefly, there.

The importance of being connected to place cannot be overlooked, as it is integral to one's sense of belonging, which is a basic human need. It is very difficult for learning to take place effectively unless our basic human needs are fulfilled.

Being connected means feeling a spiritual attachment to place, appreciating its beauty, its power and its bounty and wanting to care for it. In our Western culture, with its institutions, suburbs, commercial trappings and drive to earn money, it is all too easy to be disconnected or even lost from place.

There were many special moments for me at the conference. One of these was the group's moment of 'collective consciousness' as we sat in silence contemplating the wetlands from Ubirr. Another was my experience of drawing on the expressions of place from the wonderful women in group four to produce our 'Tree of Life and Learning'.

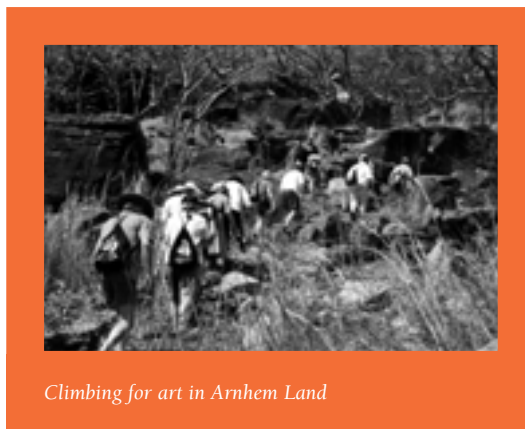
I returned to the Dandenongs with new eyes and appreciation for my own place and lots of questions about how to go forward in uncertain times, when much of the trouble of the world seems to stem from loss of, or disconnection from place. ■

Robyn Holtham works at Selby Community House (Victoria).

A TIME AND A PLACE

A conference on Adult Learning in Kakadu, NT sounded exciting from the outset and we were not to be disappointed!

The little band of learners, somewhat diminished by the Ansett collapse, were captivated by new terrain, new sounds and



Climbing for art in Arnhem Land



Rock art



Waterlilies in Kakadu

new experiences from when we first met in Darwin and began our 'journey' to unknown places.

Before Kakadu, 'My Place' always conjured up for me a peaceful, friendly, warm environ that I could retreat to in my mind when all around me was loud and fast.



Conference organisers (left to right): Helen Spiers, Rob McCormack, Jenny Czernezkyj, Alicia Boyle, Allan Arnott

After Kakadu that thought still lingers along with a broadened, deepened, emotional connection with our heritage and an appreciation of a different time and place and just 'being'.

We, all of us, were clearly touched in our hearts by this unique learning experience which we shared and will never forget.

Thankyou to all who made it happen... ■

Ruth Jurevicius is Educational Manager, Professional and Community Education (PACE) Short Courses, Onkaparinga and South East Alliance (South Australia).

THE TERRITORY WAY

'Place and the Ecology of Learning' prompted me to consider the role of place in my work developing the ACE and VET components of the EdNA Online directory. The directory is a national showpiece situated in a global context. My work is largely performed online, and the outcome exists in virtual space, or perhaps in the collaboration between practitioners and users. On the job, my learning happens

neither in a classroom nor on a workplace floor. And my work moves between places – my home, the project's base and the virtual space of the site's administration.

Two aspects of the ALA conference – that it was held in indigenous country, and that it highlighted the Territory's work in developing distance education – challenged my work. Being in indigenous country raised questions of equity and whether the directory is (or is capable of being) appropriate or useful to an indigenous learning style. And exploring distance education made me consider how we might meet the needs of directory users so that we are not simply squashing a classroom experience into 'the box'.

I didn't get all the answers, but I did learn things.

- The Territorian way of doing things is performed by many people who were not born there but who wander in and stay.
- Indigenous people are still reeling under the impact of imported culture.
- Land rights are not a solution but are an essential step.
- Northern country has a distinctive smoky smell and it burns casually and persistently.
- There's a weird wind at the Jabiru Ranger uranium mine.
- The education community of the Territory is small, strongly collaborative and experimental.
- Massacres occurred in Kakadu within my lifetime.
- EdNA Online missed an opportunity to employ indigenous art in its new graphic interface.

The experience goes on, and I'm fortunate to have it. ■

Dan Nicholas works on the EdNA Online directory.

CONNECT, CREATE, ADAPT, AND SEE THE IRONY

How quickly a sense of community developed among the delegates! Was it the isolated location and that we were all staying at the one place? Was it that we shared special experiences visiting places of learning and hearing stories in an amazing environment? Or was it all of these, and the people, and the place and, and, and...?

Time was set aside in the program for getting to know each other in an unusual way. We divided into sub-groups to draw/write/describe our places of learning, to look at what we had got from the conference and finally to identify how we would take this learning back to our 'home' place. I got to know some people very well, to think hard about my own place, to verbalise what I was learning

(not just have it wash over me) and to plan how I would use this learning. I realised how creative we can all be, and how ideas that are apparently disparate have many connections. Thanks Delia, for leading us through this process.

Presentations by National Park staff were significant for me, especially that of Victor Cooper, Special Project Officer for Aboriginal Ranger Training. A local Bininj man, Victor has been translating local Aboriginal land management knowledge so it can be included in an

I realised how creative we can all be, and how ideas that are apparently disparate have many connections.

accredited Ranger Traineeship. Centuries old skills and knowledge that have passed down through the generations are being re-packaged to fit into our (relatively) new, competency-based framework. Perhaps it is time that the competency framework became more flexible to include other forms of learning as valid in their own right?

And then the ultimate irony. We discussed caring for and respecting the land for sustainable use. And yet we were confronted at the Ranger Uranium mine with the horrific image of 'open cut' exploitation on a huge scale.

As to the many other points of reflection, in some ways 'you had to be there'. See you next year in Tassie. ■

Ellen-May Eaton is President of the Western Australian Branch of Adult Learning Australia.



Delia Bradshaw, conference rapporteur, with historian Dr Peter Read

FOR CATH STYLES, THE LAUNCH OF THE CIVICS & CITIZENSHIP LEARNING CIRCLE KIT WAS A DEMONSTRATION OF THE POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITS OF AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRACY.

Citizenship in progress



A mini-learning circle group at the launch of 'Discovering Democracy'

It took seven years to come to fruition, but the Learning Circle kit on Civics & Citizenship is finally available (to order a copy, phone Mary Hannan on 02 6251 9889 or email m.hannan@learningcircles.org.au). It is a great resource for informal groups of people to explore the structures and processes of Australian government. Questions arising from the material range from the more practical – What does the Senate do? and Should it be compulsory to vote? – to the more abstract – What does it mean to be a citizen? and What is a nation anyway?

Learning Circles often have a great impact on the lives of people who belong to them. Eileen from Mudgee had this to say about her 'Discovering Democracy' experience: "Our conversations are very thought-provoking, and discussion is lively and informed. We now have no fear of politicians and would love to go to Canberra as a group and visit Parliament House."

About 125 people attended the launch at Parliament House on 1 November, which was structured so as to remind us of the democratic process, Australian style. Five men in suits addressed the audience: Tony Greer and Noel Simpson from DETYA; Brenton Holmes, Director of the Parliamentary Education Office; Tony Brown, Director of Adult Learning Australia; and John Warhurst, Professor in Politics at the Australian National University. We may be a modern democracy, but we are still led and addressed by white men.

In between the leaders' speeches, we broke up into groups of around 12 to discuss Australian governance. In my group there were people from a retirement village, a college student, a migrant, overseas students and people who identified themselves according to their work. For at least three of us, English was a second language. Experiences and opinions among members of this learning circle differed immensely. I got the sense that were we to continue as a group, we would learn a great deal from each other. Our leaders may be white men, but as a people we are diverse, and that diversity is a wonderful asset.

Can learning circles help in making our political institutions and the broader idea of governance reflect that diversity? That's a great and worthwhile challenge. ■

Cath Styles is Print & Web Services Manager at Adult Learning Australia.

IN 2001 AUSTRALIA CELEBRATED ITS SEVENTH ADULT LEARNERS WEEK AND BY BOTH ANECDOTAL AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS, IT WAS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL YET. JOHN CROSS REPORTS.

Adult Learners Week

Most activities of the Week are presented by learning providers around the country. Using promotional resources supplied by Adult Learning Australia, and in some cases small grants administered by their state or territory governments, local providers use the Week to present activities that enable their local community to discover the learning opportunities that are available to them.

One of the promotional tools available free-of-charge to learning providers is the online calendar. This year, the calendar recorded the highest number of entries ever, reflecting a growing understanding among and participation by learning providers.

At a national level, the Week is coordinated by Adult Learning Australia. In consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, we decide the key themes for the Week, manage the communications strategy, provide information resources for coordinators around the country, and keep the various plans travelling in the same direction.

The national coordination team was also responsible for staging key Adult Learners Week activities such as the National Launch, held this year in Canberra, with the patron – Dr Peter Hollingworth – officially opening the Week. Two other national activities included managing two



national awards and staging a conference that focused on the notion of a learning society and asked ‘What will it look like?’ and ‘How will we make it happen?’.

During the conference ABC presenter Geraldine Doogue moderated a lively open forum.

The national coordination team was also responsible for the tour of two international guest speakers, Bill Lucas, Executive Director of the Campaign for Learning (UK), and Wesley Payne McClendon, Jr., a former adviser to the Clinton Government on literacy issues and an organisational change consultant. Collectively, they spoke at 20 individual events in six different cities in six different states, to an estimated combined audience of over 1000 people. This does not include their busy media schedule.

While most aspects of this year's Adult Learners Week were successful, a few deserve special mention. The first is the promotional campaign. Conceived by Green Advertising, the campaign for 2001 continued the Faces theme of 2000 but with an even greater focus on the learners' stories, their obstacles and achievements.

The campaign was presented through print materials as well as through TV and radio ads. This year the television advertisements were particularly

by Chalkley Consulting. With the two international guests as the cornerstones of the campaign, this year's Adult Learners Week achieved high exposure through the media. In the print media, over 145 newspapers, large and small, carried articles about the Week, with the words 'Adult Learners Week' appearing in around half of the article headings.

In the electronic media, the Week achieved great exposure through radio in both rural and urban areas, with over 70 Adult Learners Week mentions of half a minute or more on 45 different radio stations. Almost a third of all known radio mentions were of five minutes duration or more, with three interviews with Bill Lucas lasting for around 20 minutes. Most exposure was through the ABC radio network, including a 20-minute interview with the international guests on ABC Radio National's 'Life Matters' and an appearance by Wesley Payne McClendon Jr on the 'World Today' broadcast through the entire regional ABC network. There was some non-ABC exposure as well, including, most notably, Bill Lucas on 2UE and on Kerri-Anne Kenerley's program on 2GB (both in Sydney).

While, from an organisational perspective, we can be proud of the promotional material and the media exposure we received, these mean little if they do not have an effect on their intended audience which, this year, was broad. So how did we do?

We have no way of recording how many people actually participate in ALW events, but there were some good signs of increased participation this year. The number of entries to the Collins Booksellers Writing and the Ricoh Photo



The Patron, Dr Hollingsworth, with students from an Adult Migrant English Service class
Photo: Eddie Mistic

successful. Screened nationally on SBS and on major commercial stations in every state and territory, the advertisements were often screened during prime time – during the evening news, 'Home and Away' and key sporting events – a testament to the high production values of the advertisements. (The TV and radio advertisements are produced for ALA as part of a sponsorship arrangement with Green Advertising, and are aired for free as a community service provided by the stations.)

Associated with the promotional campaign was a media campaign conducted this year

Competitions were outstanding with the photo competition attracting three times the number of entrants than last year, the writing competition attracting four times the number of entrants. Use of the website shot up too, almost doubling from 2000.

The usage of the 1300 phone number over time showed a steady climb towards Adult Learners Week with the highest number of calls recorded on the Monday of the Week. The number of calls to the 1300 number, combined with anecdotal information on what these calls were about, presents a strong case for the need for a comprehensive, easy-to-access reference service giving the general public information about the full range of adult learning opportunities available to them.

While it is hoped that everyone seeing the Adult Learners Week publicity will participate in the Week's activities, we know that this cannot be so. However, even if somebody is unable to participate in an Adult Learners Week activity, simply hearing about it may prompt them to investigate their learning options at a later date. Such a response is difficult to measure, but an AC Nielson survey conducted as part of an ANTA evaluation of Adult Learners Week revealed that one in four Australians were aware of the term 'Adult Learners Week', with around one in five aware of this year's ALW publicity. The study also revealed that 55 per cent of the Australian adult population feel positive about adult learning and are open to messages about it. This is heartening news for everyone working in the adult learning sector.

By all measures, Adult Learners Week is achieving considerable recognition for itself and for adult learning as a concept generally. The Week has been able to

achieve market penetration far in excess of what might be expected given the tiny budgets that are involved at all levels of coordination. Adult Learning Australia should be proud of the status the Week now holds within Australia, as the organisation's stewardship of the Week over the years has contributed much to the success the Week has become.

Where to from here? That Adult Learners Week will continue is beyond doubt. The main challenges for the future are now less to do with gaining recognition of, and securing 'survival' for, the Week than with identifying directions for future campaigns, especially with reference to target audiences. Identifying these audiences, and how to reach them, are the main tasks now occupying the national coordination team. A process of wide stakeholder consultation – via telephone surveying and meetings around the country – is well underway. And as always, there is an open invitation to all ALA members to offer their feedback on any aspect of Adult Learners Week.

The next Adult Learners Week will run from 2–8 September, 2002. A book featuring some of the most interesting stories, personalities, ideas and programs from 2001 will be published around February 2002. The Adult Learners Week website (www.adultlearnersweek.org) remains live and contains a full list of all 2001 award winners, a selection of photos, and regular updates on planning. ■

John Cross, the National Coordinator of Adult Learners Week, is keen to hear what ALA members consider to be the potential of Adult Learners Week, and, in particular, which audiences should – for whatever reason – be targeted in future campaigns.

Rejuvenation

WE RECEIVED SO MANY ENTRIES FOR THE ADULT LEARNERS WEEK 2001 COLLINS BOOKSELLERS WRITING COMPETITION THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO CHOOSE THE WINNERS. HERE WE REPRODUCE A COMMENDABLE ENTRY THAT MISSED OUT ON A PRIZE. IT'S BY MEGAN ROWE.

"I can't even operate the video recorder your dad got me, how am I supposed to use that?" Aunty Marj laughed, taking a sip of tea, and returning to the pages of her latest library book.

"Don't worry, Dad used to be really hopeless on the computer too!" her playful ten year old nephew turned from the desk to grin, "He's not too bad now."

"Now hurry on! Just because you and that thing are here for the week, doesn't mean you get to stay up late!"

"But I need you to help me with my homework, I told you!" Josh implored with his biggest smile, "Dad says you're a really quick typist!"

"Ah, the delights of Paris in the 19th century must wait for my return," Aunty Marj rolled her eyes and put down her book.

"Here, you have the big chair," offered Josh, as he moved to make way, "I'll click the mouse where I want it to go."

"Click the mouse? When I was your age you could catch a mouse, or scare a mouse, but clicking a mouse?" joked Aunty Marj.

"Very funny, ha ha ha. You know about computers," Josh glanced warily at his aunt.

"Well, yes, I know about them, hear about them all the time, see them on the telly,

but I – I've never actually used one," she confessed.

Josh knew she wasn't joking, "For real?"

"Not that I'm interested, really," Aunty Marj declared, "I've gotten by all my life without them, why should I start now?"

"But Aunty Marj, there's so much you could do! You could send email..."

"The Post Office is still in operation, I believe," his aunt retorted.

"...or do artwork..."

"I have brushes and paint aplenty, " she was unmoved.

"Play games?"

Aunty Marj tilted her head to the trunk in the corner, which Josh knew from experience contained every board game known to mankind.

"You could write," he suggested timidly.

She held up a pen and paper off the desk with a glare.

"But you can find out so much about anything you like, anything you're interested in! And new stuff!" Josh was exasperated, "It's such a fun way to learn heaps!"

For a moment it seemed his aunt's interest had been sparked. Yet if it had, she thought better of it.

“I’m old enough to ‘know heaps’ myself,” she imitated him, “Now come on, what do you need me to help you with? I want to get back to the final chapter of my book.”

“Ok, ok, this is the search engine,” he clicked on a picture and a blank box appeared on the screen, “Now I need you to type in keywords. My assignment is about, um...” Josh rustled among his schoolbooks on the floor, “...elephants and where they come from and what they eat and do they sleep and all that sort of thing. Just type in ‘information on elephants’ to start with.”

“And I suppose this will tell you absolutely everything you need to know,” Aunty Marj was sceptical as her fingers flew over the keys.

“Well, pretty much!” grinned Josh, “Now press the ‘Enter’ button.”

“What does that-” Aunty Marj was cut off before she could ask for an explanation.

“There you go,” Josh was victorious, “That’s a list of all the websites that have information for me about elephants!”

There was a brief silence.

“Oh! Well! Just like that? I mean, that’s it?” Aunty Marj seemed genuinely surprised, “I had no idea!”

“Type in ‘pictures of elephants’ and see what we get,” Josh was enthusiastic as he directed his somewhat overwhelmed aunt.

“And because I have to go to bed, I just click here,” Josh demonstrated with the mouse, “and the computer will remember all this when I want to look at it again tomorrow!”

“Bed, yes, absolutely right,” his aunt seemed distracted as she hustled him off to the spare room, and kissed him goodnight.



She headed for her cosy armchair and her final chapter amid the flickering, unfamiliar light of the computer screen, accidentally catching her foot on Josh’s pile of schoolbooks.

“Oh no!” she cried, as the book and her cup of tea were swept together to the floor. The paperback was drenched, unreadable for the time being.

After catching her breath and rescuing the carpet with a towel, Aunty Marj glanced boredly around the room. So much for finishing her library book.

The computer screen caught her eye. She chuckled to herself, then reached for the TV guide instead. Hold on, she thought, why not?! The TV guide went back on the table, as she slowly approached the new gadget instead.

It was just a box of metal, really, she thought. A bit of glass for the screen, and

heavens knows how many wires and fiddly things inside it. Funny how it's captured everyone's imagination, she pondered. Well, maybe there is something to it after all.

"Bit bright," she mumbled as she sat herself down in the "big chair", staring at the screen, and adjusting her glasses .

Cautiously, she took hold of the computer mouse, and moved it around the way she had seen Josh do. She pressed her finger down, and heard a quiet click. "Oh!" she was pleased with herself, "I clicked the mouse!"

The empty box appeared before her. She frowned, what now? What would her keywords be? Josh's words echoed in her ear, "...anything you like...", she thought, "Anything?" Aunty Marj's face lit up with a broad smile as her speedy fingers played with the keyboard.

"Paris in the 19th century" she typed.
Enter.

Choices, such choices! History of, Literature of, Food, Travel, Architecture, Art, all her favourites – so much to revisit and enjoy, so many fresh new stories and pictures. And people, people just like her, creating their own pages about their own interests, welcoming you to write to them, all there at your fingertips. It may have been a long time since Aunty Marj had been to school, but a love of learning and the joy of discovery had never been lost on her.

Dizzy with her new unexpected passion, it was way past her own bedtime when Aunty Marj pulled back from the screen, a tad cross-eyed, mind overflowing with new places and stories, lists in her head of things to follow up, new books to read, people to contact, discoveries to be made.

Josh and Aunty Marj shared a quiet breakfast. So quiet in fact that Josh noticed his aunt didn't even bother correcting him when he read comics at the table.

"So how did your dad change from Really Hopeless to Not Too Bad? On the computer, that is." Aunty Marj asked nonchalantly over her cuppa.

Josh shrugged, "Dad did lessons at my school on the weekends, grownup lessons."

"Oh, for adults just like your father?" Aunty Marj asked, a tinge of disappointment in her voice.

"Nah, they had really old people like you there too!" Josh said cheerily, "They've even got this club going, where they get together and send emails, I dunno, to other really old people around the world, don't ask me!" Josh chomped on his toast. Until it registered. "Oh, no way, do you want to?"

"No, why on earth should I?" Aunty Marj couldn't restrain her yawn any longer.

"Ooh, you do seem a bit tired this morning, Aunty Marj!" Josh teased, "You spent ages on the computer, didn't you?!"

Aunty Marj waved off a grinning Josh at the school gate. As soon as he had disappeared into the colourful crowd of sports uniforms and backpacks, she made a detour to the Office.

"My nephew mentioned you run adult computer courses," she confidently asked the receptionist.

"Certainly!," the girl reached for the brochure stand, "Just fill out the enrolment form, and if you could also fill out our survey, just to let us know where you heard about us, and why you want to enrol in the course..."

Aunty Marj grinned, refreshed, "My nephew said it's a fun way to learn heaps!" ■

FIFTEEN MONTHS AFTER THE NEW TAX SYSTEM WAS INTRODUCED, TONY BROWN EXPLAINS THAT WE NOW HAVE SOME RELIABLE INFORMATION ON THE GST'S IMPACT ON ACE ORGANISATIONS.

Accounting for change – the GST in ACE

Research conducted by the University of South Australia for Adult Learning Australia estimates that the tax collected on all ACE courses was around \$5.9 million over the first year of operation.

The study estimates that the direct staff costs involved in completing Business Activity Statements alone amount to \$750 000. But these aren't the only costs. Those surveyed described other new burdens imposed on community organisations that were previously tax-exempt and often relied on volunteer treasurers and committees.

One person explained that concessions for students “have had to stop being offered because [...] we have to add the GST component”. Another said “we have spiralling costs. We lost sales tax exemption and most of the costs on goods and services have gone up. We pay 24 per cent more for paper”. Another described pressure to participate in the black economy. “The difficulty we have now is finding people and suppliers to do small jobs – they want to be paid cash in hand”. Organisations also express frustration at their new role of tax collector: “We get [government] grants which have a GST component. At the end of three months, we spend four hours transferring on paper the GST from one

box to another and send the money back to the government.”

The question that needs to be answered is whether the cost involved in collecting the GST on ACE courses is worth it. The costs involved in educating 1000 organisations about the new system, in introducing new hardware and software systems and new business systems, in staff time in training and completing the BAS, and most

The question that needs to be answered is whether the cost involved in collecting the GST on ACE courses is worth it.

importantly, the costs imposed on adults wanting to continue learning, resulted in only \$5.9m for the government.

There is some evidence of confusion among providers in how the tax should be applied, pointing to a need for ongoing support and assistance in applying the tax. This is not surprising. Firstly, every ACE course needs to be individually assessed to see if it is GST exempt. If it is accredited then the situation is clear: exempt. If it is not, then one of four different criteria can be applied to determine the course's tax status. For an ACE program manager, this is not a simple tax system. Secondly, confusion is not confined to the community sector. Recently the Victorian

government announced that it had incorrectly advised all Victorian museums and galleries about the GST and entry fees. Similarly, in the first year of operation some major retailers were caught out incorrectly applying the tax. It is little wonder that small and medium community-based organisations have also experienced difficulties.

Education is still not GST-free. The ACE amendments introduced last June have complicated, not clarified, the system. Costs of collecting the tax outweigh the revenue gained. And there is evidence that the tax is having an adverse impact on efforts to attract the students who most need to return to learning.

Will this situation be changed? Unfortunately only one of the political parties has committed to removing the GST from ACE courses. The Coalition remains steadfast in not supporting any change to the current system. The ALP indicated last year that they opposed the tax but so far rollback makes no commitment to doing so. The Democrats have said they “would prefer to see no GST on courses but the bottom line is there must be no GST on any accredited education courses”, a position effectively identical to the Coalition’s. Only the Greens unequivocally support removing the GST from ACE courses.

Whatever the outcome of the federal election there will remain the need to continue efforts to remove this burden on adult learners.

The full report, *Accounting for Change*, includes much more information on the impact of the GST on ACE organisations. It will be published by ALA in December. ■

Only half

JOHN CROSS ATTENDED THE RECENT ‘CULTURE@COM.UNITY’ CONFERENCE IN SYDNEY. THE CONFERENCE CONFIRMED WHAT JOHN HAS LONG ARGUED, THAT MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES HAVE FORGOTTEN THEIR ROLE AS EDUCATORS.

In 1968, the National Gallery of Victoria opened its new building to great fanfare. Among its utopian features were open mezzanine balconies designated as ‘study balconies’. Here eager students of the arts could contemplate the thousands of objects held within the gallery’s impressive collections. Recently the building shut its doors for renovation. It had become scuff-marked and overcrowded. Also, the focus of the Gallery’s activities had changed: it was now all about providing a ‘good day out’, ‘blockbusters’, coffee and somewhere nice to hold a wedding. The study balconies had long been closed to the public, cluttered with objects deemed unworthy of exhibit (such as the Gallery’s entire furniture collection), and forgotten.

The ‘disappearance’ of these study balconies is a good motif for what has happened across the Australian museum and gallery sector over the past few decades. In a world of shifting priorities, the role of the gallery or museum as a

the job:

How museums and galleries are letting us down

provider of quality education for the whole community has been obscured by other concerns, such as raising money, securing sponsors, and being popular.

The ‘culture@com.unity’ conference demonstrated this shift. It was opened by Sandra Christine Noris, the NSW Minister for Small Business and Tourism, not for the Arts or for Education. There may have been quite pragmatic reasons for this, but the choice resonates with meaning. As became obvious throughout the conference, the museum and gallery sector is comfortable identifying itself as a ‘tourist site’ and keen to embrace the language of small business and industry.

Keynote UK speaker Simon Roodhouse confirmed this contemporary attitude when he argued that museums and galleries have to start thinking of themselves as small businesses.

The cultural sector must, he argued, restructure itself as an industry. Roodhouse argued that by re-conceptualising the museum, gallery or other community cultural project as a business, we can move away from a reliance on government funding – and

the limited thinking that comes with this – and reclaim ownership of agendas and goals.

The obsession with getting money and managing resources better has infected the museum sector like leprosy.

This way of thinking is certainly appealing. Adopting the language of business helps focus museums on audience needs and audience development: a good thing. But it can also cause museums to believe that making money and managing resources are its most important goals, leading to a situation in which all its policies, plans and even conversations are dominated by a money-making agenda.

If we take the ‘culture@com.unity’ conference program as a reflection of what is uppermost in the museum sector’s pantheon of concerns, then the obsession with getting money and managing resources better has infected the museum sector like leprosy, deforming the agenda and stunting potentially fruitful discussions. The program was crammed

with sessions on finding new sources of funding and achieving great things with tiny budgets; mapping audiences and managing volunteers; and negotiating cultural ownership and presenting cultural products. Survival is important, but so is taking stock of what, exactly, we are surviving for. There are, and should be, other things to talk about at a museum conference.

Education, once so fundamental to museums and galleries, was not on the agenda at all, either formally or informally. No sessions focused on the provision of education programs. There were no opportunities to discuss the concept of learning preferences, informal learning, or learning partnerships. In a gathering of eager museum professionals, education was invisible.

A session on designing exhibitions was a case in point. The first speaker – a museum project manager – outlined the steps involved in successful exhibition planning, from brainstorming to the exhibition opening. Education strategies were mentioned only once in the whole process, and were listed as ‘optional’. The second speaker – an exhibition designer – explained how the medium of a display is dictated by the messages that the curators want to push. In an off-the-cuff anecdote he referred to some feedback received during market testing of a design, but this was the only time that he came close to discussing the learning needs of visitors. The third speaker described the resourcefulness of her local community and team of volunteers in transforming an abandoned shed into a lively local history exhibition. Her training as a graphic designer, she told us, meant that she could produce attractive text panels.

During question time, I asked why discussion of educational strategies was ‘optional’? Why was there no ‘Stage Four’ in the design process – the post-opening stage, for ongoing evaluation and modification according to visitor responses? To what extent do educational theories, such as multiple intelligences and learning preferences, inform exhibition design? I could also have questioned the value of attractive text labels, given that according to visitor surveys, most people do not read them, and given that 44 per cent of Australian adults have inadequate literacy and numeracy skills. (OECD, International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) 1999)

The panellists’ answers ranged from evasive to inadequate: “Oh well we are talking about design here and education doesn’t really come into that”; “By education, I meant schools programs”; and “Of course we match the design of the exhibit to the message: when trying to explain how bats navigate, obviously a sound installation is the best way to get this message across”. Aside from the fact that, for me, an image of ripples on a pool of water would better explain this principle than high-pitched squeaking sounds, these kinds of responses are just not good enough. The purpose of a museum is education. A museum may have a ‘collection’, and a large part of the operational budget may be spent on collecting and conserving things, but a collection is collection; it is not a museum. A museum is a site for interaction between the public and the collection; a conduit; a place of learning.

You don’t have to take my word for it. Visitors expect to learn in museums. In another conference session Lynda Kelly,

Head of the Audience Research Centre at the Australian Museum – and notably someone with an adult education background – revealed that when asked what they were expecting from their visit to the museum, 71 per cent of visitors responded “to learn something”.

(Coincidentally, the same percentage said that they had visited the museum for entertainment.)

Museums and galleries do ‘do’ education. Most large museums and galleries have education sections, but mostly, they are concerned with school-aged children. ‘Education’ in a museum or gallery means a room with a sink, a sea of crepe paper, an army of Clag glue bottles, round-ended scissors, and ice cream containers stained with paint. Museums and galleries also ‘do’ education for adults, but by another name: curatorship, exhibition design, information, visitor services, public programs, members programs and so on. Perhaps these functions are not called ‘education’ because that name and concept has already been taken by the (children’s) education department. Staff of these other sections are often unaware of their role as education facilitators and thus of how they could better serve their (adult) students.

So how can we reinstate museums as recognised sites of lifelong learning? We must begin to call a spade a spade: a curator an educator and a designer a learning facilitator. As museum visitors we must use museums as we might any other learning site: go in regularly and demand interaction. We must feel at liberty to disagree with a gallery guide, take issue with the way that objects have been contextualised, and ask about the objects that the museum dares not show (all museums and galleries have these). As learning community practitioners we

We must begin to call a spade a spade: a curator an educator and a designer a learning facilitator.

must also include museums in our discussions and debates. As a learning community we must attend museum and gallery conferences. At ‘culture@com.unity’, I was the only person, out of around 290 delegates, from the non-museum learning sector. Where was the ACE sector? Where was the NSW Department for Education?

Museums and the ACE sector have common problems for which solutions could be found by sharing experience and expertise. This point aside, museum audiences represent a huge source of potential students for ACE. A recent survey conducted as part of an evaluation of Adult Learners Week revealed that around 5.5 per cent of adults had participated in an ACE activity in the past 12 months, while around 39 per cent had visited a cultural institution. With 71 per cent of museum visitors hungry to learn, museums are the ACE sector’s metaphorical barrel of fish.

There are some positive signs. Some museums do think of themselves as adult educators, have forged links with ACE, and do provide a variety of learning experiences for adult visitors – the Melbourne Museum and Old Parliament House in Canberra are two.

And an ongoing conversation about this issue has begun at www.ala.asn.au/limn, a discussion forum open to anyone passionate about the role museums can play with adult education. ■

John Cross used to work in the museum sector and is now the National Coordinator of Adult Learners Week.

THIS ISSUE, JANET BURSTALL INTRODUCES YOU TO AUSTRALIAN BOOK CLUBS AND READING GROUPS: A BURGEONING INFORMAL ADULT EDUCATION ACTIVITY.

Learning by reading and writing

A page on the National Library of Australia (NLA) website on 'Book Clubs and Reading Groups' links to a number of book clubs including some specialist-subject ones, and advice on sources of notes to support book clubs.

"Australia's largest book club" is how the ABC radio program 'Australia Talks Books' is billed. Replay audio on demand of the most recent monthly program, link to the Radio National book reading and listen to the most recent episode, join in the online forum, and get discussion notes from CAE Book Groups.

The Centre of Adult Education (CAE) Book Groups have 11 500 members and there are over 1000 groups across the country. Borrow the books for a group. CAE provides quality notes identifying themes, background reading and discussion questions to support discussion amongst the group.

HELP WITH CHOOSING YOUR READING MATERIAL

The State Library of Queensland Reader Services has loads of links to help your book club, including lists of books by type or genre, other book clubs, publishers who provide notes, online bookshops, and literary awards.

Wordonbooks is an online journal of new release books news and interviews. Its primary focus is Australian books.

Literary Liaisons is written by Murray Waldren, a journalist with

The Australian newspaper. He reproduces his interviews with authors and comments on developments and events in Australian literature, for example comparing various writers festivals.

GET YOUR BOOKS ONLINE

Project Gutenberg makes texts "available free to everyone!" The authors and their works are out of copyright, ie mainly dead. Available texts include Dumas, Conan Doyle, Thomas Hardy, Charles Dickens, William Morris, Banjo Paterson and Henry Lawson. The search facility is powerful and there is a choice of file size and format for downloading the texts. You can also help to add texts.

CONNECT WITH WRITERS, OR TAKE THE STEP AND BE A WRITER

The Australia Council provides a list of state writers centres. Follow the links > Resources > Arts organisations > Writers centres and writers organisations. It omits the funky Northern Rivers Writers Centre at <http://www.nrwc.org.au/>. If you're holidaying around Northern NSW you should be able to find some events such as a book launch, or a presentation of proposed film projects. If you're serious, follow the links from the front page to Support for the Arts > Literature for all about grants and how to apply.

Australian Society of Authors also provides links to recent news reports and policy positions on the book industry, copyright,

intellectual property and author support activities.

Australian Book Webring has over 200 listings, a very mixed bag of links to the sites of general and specialist, well and little-known publishers, bookshops, agents, authors, and online novels. ■

Janet Burstall is ALA's Information Manager until the end of the year.

AUSTRALIA TALKS BOOKS

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/arts/atbooks/>

AUSTRALIAN BOOK WEBRING

<http://S.webring.com/hub?ring=ausbookweb&id=38&hub>

AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF AUTHORS

<http://www.asauthors.org/>

AUSTRALIA COUNCIL

<http://www.ozco.gov.au/>

CAE BOOK GROUPS

<http://www.cae.edu.au/bookgroups/>

LITERARY LIAISONS

<http://members.ozemail.com.au/~waldrenm/>

NLA BOOK CLUBS AND READING GROUPS

<http://www.nla.gov.au/libraries/resource/bookclub.html>

PROJECT GUTENBERG

<http://promo.net/pg/>

STATE LIBRARY OF QUEENSLAND READER SERVICES

<http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/publib/reader/#bookclubs>

WORDONBOOKS

<http://www.wordonbooks.com/>

TASMANIA

Tasmanian branch President Noela Foxcroft featured in The Mercury's weekly commentary in the lead-up to the federal election. As an active retiree and former teacher, she provided her personal opinions regarding teaching and lifelong learning, both areas in which she has a strong passion.

We have been able to promote the local branch and ALA through recent Conference participation. All delegates at the Tasmanian Association of Community Houses Inc. state conference in September received the latest information, including the 2002 national conference, and a volunteer's recognition family day on 21st October, also provided another opportunity to hand out some brochures.

A current focus for the Tasmanian branch is the 2002 conference to be held in Hobart from 9–11 August 2002. With a theme of "Catch a tiger by the tail..." we hope to capture all things Tasmanian and apply it to lifelong learning. The enthusiasm of the members of the Tasmanian branch Committee shines through in the promotional pamphlet that has been produced. For more information or a brochure, phone me on 03 6237 7471 or 0419 328 469, or email dpcc@southcom.com.au. ■

Jan Dunsby

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

With State and Federal election fever in the air, the branch has had a political focus this year, running a pre-State-election lobbying campaign, meeting with the new Minister for Training, and with Dr Carmen Lawrence MP.

Tony Brown's visit to the West coincided with our AGM and the meeting with the Hon John Kobelke, when we put forward our vision of adult learning in Western Australia. Subsequently, the Branch made a submission to the Review of the Training Sector in WA. We asked for the government to demonstrate its commitment to ACE and sought a broad-based review of ACE, for transparent processes, the fostering of partnerships and an expansion of the focus of the Department of Training and the TAFEs to include the broader concept of lifelong learning.

Adult Learners Week went well this year. There were an increased number of awards, particularly focusing on the many volunteers who are, as we know, the backbone of ACE everywhere. It was great to have a broad range of these groups represented at the awards night, which acknowledged individuals and organizations from TAFEs, Learning Centres, Environmental and literacy education, choirs and so on. Bill Lucas inspired us

at a presentation over breakfast, before a seminar to a packed lecture theatre on the topic of learning communities. We were very pleased by the involvement of many local government representatives at this – so hopefully we can make some good connections as a result.

Ellen-May made it to the Conference in Jabiru, and it was obvious that she gained so much from that experience. What a place for such an event. It's a pity that a few missed out due to the airline problems.

The Branch constantly seeks to extend its networks and has recently met with the Director of the Citizens and Civics Unit, Department of the Premier and Cabinet, to share our vision of adult learning and its contribution, among other things, to active citizenship.

We continue our involvement with the ACE Advisory committee, and have recently received a report on the Professional Development and recognition needs of ACE providers in WA. This is a good grounding from which to move forward with planning at both an advisory committee and Branch level.

We are still working with the Department of Health to develop a Falls Prevention for Older Persons Learning Circle. Recently, news has filtered

through of some good follow-throughs from the WA initiative to promote the Learning & Living in the Third Age Learning Circle; a hostel in Lesmurdie reports on its enthusiastic fortnightly Circles who made contact as they had run out of material! COTA run Circles on the last Friday of each month and, as a follow up on the Circle who met to discuss Genetic Engineering, COTA organised a most successful seminar on the subject. ■

Wendy Shearwood

NEW SOUTH WALES

The NSW Branch has been very active over the last few months with Adult Learners Week and the lead-up activities to this important event. Preparations commenced some months earlier with the Branch Executive working with BACE on the nominations for the various categories for the Adult Learner Week Awards. With so many quality entrants, deciding on winners was as difficult this year as in past years.

The Week began with the formal launch and the ALW presentation by the Minister of Education and the Director General of Education, the Chair and the Director of BACE. On Tuesday we had afternoon tea and listened to Ms Anne Anker, Coordinator of the Older/Bolder Network in the UK. On Wednesday the Branch and BACE hosted a breakfast in Parramatta for international guest, Wesley McLendon. We also guided him through a number of media interviews. Wesley spoke again to the RCVET at UTS that evening. Thursday provided a wonderful opportunity to hear some thought-provoking views presented by speakers like Kay Schofield, Geraldine Doogue and Bill Lucas, along with other excellent local speakers, on the topic of 'The Learning Society: What would it look like?'. The last two formal events for the week were the luncheon organised by BACE for Bill Lucas and the Sydney Community College Awards Night and Celebration of Adult Learning.

Bill Lucas presented the Bob Frew Memorial Oration. I am pleased to report that the Branch Executive were able to represent the NSW Branch at every formal event this year.

Our other main area of activity has been supporting the National Office with their Learning Circles initiatives. We have developed a number of written submissions and attended meetings with prospective partners to further develop the Learning Circle initiative. These include the Centre for Men's Health at UWS, Parramatta City Council and GROW. I hope to be able to report some positive outcomes from this activity in my next report.

Finally, a tribute to honour the memory of an old friend, activist for adult learning and Branch Executive Member – Kate Campbell – by the Mosman Council was held on 9 November with the dedication of a memorial plaque close to Balmoral Beach. ■

Ron Anderson

BUILDING COMMUNITIES ON THE WEB

Have you seen the newest ALA Interest Group, the 'Learning in museums network (Limn)'? It will link adult educators to museum professionals. Check it out and join via www.ala.asn.au/interests.

And have you created an Interest Groups user profile for yourself? Profiles appear as links whenever you post, so that others can find out a bit about you. To create a profile, follow the prompts at www.ala.asn.au/interests/subscribe.html.

New members

INDIVIDUALS

Melissa Baker	NSW	Elizabeth Gooding	VIC
Cheryl Balaam	NSW	Karen Ireland	WA
Alicia Boyle	NT	Janice Macpherson	QLD
Peter Bryant	QLD	Vicki Peterson	NSW
Helen Cameron	SA	Stephen Poli	WA
Steve D'Arcy	VIC	Helen Spiers	NT
Sandra de Rose	NSW	Elaine Sturgeon	NT
Jane Durie	NSW	Heather Wilson	NZ
Sandra Gadd	ACT		

ORGANISATIONS

Harrington Projects
CARINDALE QLD 4152
Toowoomba City Council
TOOWOOMBA QLD 4350

JOIN ALA TODAY

ALL ALA MEMBERS RECEIVE THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER, THE AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF ADULT LEARNING, E-SERVICES, ACCESS TO A NATIONAL NETWORK OF ADULT EDUCATORS AND REPRESENTATION BY THEIR PEAK BODY.

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CALENDAR

30 November–1 December

Information Literacy: The Social Action Agenda

The fifth National Information Literacy Conference will ask: How is information obtained, interpreted and used for social action? It's at the Education Development Centre in Hindmarsh, South Australia.

Contact: Irene Dorskatch,
p 08 8302 6279,
e irene.dorskatsch@unisa.edu.au
<http://www.library.unisa.edu.au/events/ilconf2001.htm>

3 December

Learning towns, growing communities

The Learning Towns Network Conference 2001 will be held at Bellinzona Grange Conference Centre in Victoria.

Contact: Joanne Grainger
p 03 5337 9020
e joanneg@brace.vic.edu.au

3–6 December

International Conference on Computers in Education

Aims to foster knowledge about the use of information technology in education throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Will be held at the North Harbour Stadium in Auckland.

Contact: Conference Secretary,
p +64 6 350 5233 f +64 6 350 5725
e icce2002_admin@massey.ac.nz
<http://www.icce2001.org/>

2–6 December

Australian Association for Research in Education

To be held at the University of Notre Dame in Fremantle, Australia, the Conference's theme is 'Crossing borders: New frontiers for educational research'

Contact: AARE Office & Conference Secretariat,
p 03 5964 9296, f 03 5964 9586,
e aare@aare.edu.au,
<http://www.aare.edu.au>

5–7 December

Renewing communities in the digital era

Global CN2001: 2nd World Congress of Citizens' Networks conference, at the Intercontinental Hotel in Buenos Aires.

Contact: Ken Young,
e ken.young@chisolm.vic.edu.au,
<http://www.globalcn2001.org>

9–12 December

3rd Asia Pacific Conference on Problem Based Learning

The University of Newcastle invites you to join us at the 3rd Asia Pacific Conference on Problem Based Learning to be held at the Rydges Capricorn Resort, Yeppoon via Rockhampton.

Contact: Juliane Ward,
p 02 4921 7337, f 02 4921 6994
e problarc@newcastle.edu.au

3–6 February 2002

Changing Agendas in Teacher Education

To be held at the University of New England, Armidale, NSW, this conference will examine challenges for teacher education in the 21st century and lay out new designs for meeting them.

Contact: UNE Conference Company,
p 02 6773 2154, f 02 6773 3766,
e confco@metz.une.edu.au,
<http://scs.une.edu.au/conference>

11–17 February 2002

Summer Festival of Learning

To be held in Horsham from your backyard to the classroom. Enjoy the sunshine while learning something new. We have activities happening all around Horsham with a street party with music and dancing – learn to line dance, play the tuba, do irish dancing or play the bagpipes. Anyone who has further ideas for our festival or who is planning to be in Horsham around this time we will be happy to talk to you about how you can join in!

Contact: Bernadette Hetherington,
p 03 5381 2408, f 03 5381 2104

4 March 2002

Return on investment in training

This NCVET Research Forum will be

held in Sydney and will involve case studies and workshop activities.

Contact: Kim Rickards,
e forums@ncver.edu.au,
<http://www.ncver.edu.au/news/conf/roi.htm>

24–27 March 2002

2nd World Congress of Colleges & Polytechnics

A four-day event at the Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre embodying a two-day ANTA 'provider-oriented' forum. The congress will explore globalisation, technology and youth; accessibility; strengthening partnerships; funding; and professional development.

Contact: World Congress Secretariat,
p 03 9417 0888, f 03 9417 0899,
e wj@meetingplanners.com.au,
<http://www.wfworldcongress.com>

16–19 June 2002

2nd International Lifelong Learning Conference

This conference, with the theme 'Building learning communities through education', will be held at Rydges Capricorn International Resort on the Capricorn Coast, Yeppoon, Queensland.

Contact: Conference Secretary,
p 07 4930 9749 f 07 4930 6436,
e lifelong-learning-conference@cqu.edu.au
<http://www.library.cqu.edu.au/conference>

10 and 16 April 2002

Closer to learning: Young adult learners partnerships (YALP) conferences

Participants will discuss the work of the British YALP in fostering the social inclusion of young adults and their re-integration with learning. Particular attention will be paid to developments in policy and practice with regard to basic skills, emotional literacy, mental health, citizenship and neighbourhood renewal.

Contact: Celestine Harris,
e celestine.harris@niace.org.uk,
<http://www.niace.org.uk/Conferences/Closer.htm>